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ABSTRACT

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A Research Approach to Bring Student Views into the Creation of Professional Development Experiences

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Abstract

In this paper we present two studies in which personal constructs are used to document the nature of learning in professional preparation programs, a study of student teachers and a study of student nurses. Using a research approach developed by Shapiro (1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1996), employing narrative inquiry and reflection on construct changes, learners discuss their experiences in the professional preparation programs. Insights from the two studies are described and compared and a case for the inclusion of student voice in the teaching learning dialogue and in the planning of professional educational programs is made.

A great number of changes occur in students' thinking about what it means to be a member of a profession during professional preparation experiences. Ironically, when students make this first entry into the field, it is usually a time of less interaction with those who develop and provide their educational programs. Therefore, student voice and experience may have very little presence in the design of professional development programs.

In this paper we describe the findings of the use of a research approach developed by Shapiro (1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1996) that uses reflection and discussion of personal construct changes to help students in professional programs reflect on changes in their growth and socialization into their profession. We present insights into students' experience of change during their educational experiences. The goal of this work is to incorporate insights from student narratives and reflection into the organization and design of professional development programs. Examples are provided from studies in teacher and clincal nursing education.

We first describe the research approach as it emerges from personal construct theory and situate the study within the literature of research on professional preparation programs in teacher education and in clinical nursing education. Case reports of narrative reflection by students in conversation with interviewers are presented to illustrate the usefulness of the approach. Finally, we present a discussion on the kinds of insights gained in this work and the value of incorporating research on students' own progress as a valuable part of the professional preparation program.

Research On Teacher Preparation Programs

University teacher preparation programs are the first chance for teacher educators to begin to know students, yet there is little opportunity in these programs to discover the ways that students make connections with the information gained in methods coursework and the practical teaching experiences of each student teacher and how they are socialized into the profession. The same is true of student nurses. This difficulty is largely due to the traditional structuring of teacher education programs. Large classes impede getting to knowing individual students well.

The Importance of Studying Growth in Professional Preparation Programs in Teacher Education. New ways of coming to know students and understanding changes in student teacher development are needed. But also, and perhaps more importantly, new ways are needed to help students articulate and value changes in their own growth and development **as that growth and development is taking place.** Studies of conversation and dialogue have recently been valued as important ways of focussing on this development (Keiny, S., & Dreyfus, A., 1989; Osborne, 1992; Zeichner, 1992; Kuzmic, 1994; Johnston, 1994; Featherstone & Feiman-Nemser, 1992). This article reports on a study of students' developing ideas about what it means to be a teacher. The research approach attempts to understand students' ideas not only for the benefit of research, but to benefit student understanding. The research approach provides the opportunity for student teachers to **dialogue in action, that is, during the action of learning to teach.** In this research project, students become students of their own teaching.

Fundamental to the design of the research are several beliefs about teacher preparation programs. First, the process of becoming a teacher should be an occasion to value and clarify the principles and values which underlie one's own ideas about what it means to be a teacher. It should be a time of articulating one's images of teaching and of acquiring language for communicating ideas about teaching and learning. It should be a time for exploring ideas about interacting with students, about using curriculum resources, and about being in schools. It should offer a chance to risk and explore, and try many different methods of teaching. It should be a time of developing a deeper awareness of oneself in the task one is understanding. Research into one's developing practice means becoming aware of one's present ideas about teaching and how those ideas grow and develop. It is through opportunities to talk about one's experience that reorganization of thinking and reconceptualization of self as teacher can effectively take place.

The central theoretical position of this work is that learning to teach is an active process requiring opportunities for articulating connections that exist between thoughts and action, an opportunity which is absent from the majority of teacher preparation programs. The value of "reflection in action" (Schön, 1983) has been an important focus in the study of teaching practice (Grimmett and Erickson, 1988). Grimmett (1988) notes that Schön attributes special meaning to this phrase, stating that the practice of reflection should occur **in the action,** and that this reflection is a kind of research oriented to practice. Schön (1988) writes:

> Research should be oriented to practice. Instructional supervision would be seen, on this view, as a research activity. Both the reflective teacher and the reflective coach are researchers in and on practice, whose work depends on their collaboration with each other. It is the nurturing of groups of researchers of this sort, at the core of the schools of education, that I believe holds greatest promise for healing the breach between educational research and practice, revitalizing the schools of education, and mobilizing their resources in support of reflective teaching in schools. (p. 29)

Such an approach places high value on the personalized, reflective opportunities needed to enhance professional development and growth both in teaching and clinical nursing.

Foundation of the Research in Personal Construct Theory

At the heart of the present study is Personal Construct Theory which promotes the belief that the chief participant in the effort to understand the dilemmas and challenges of life experience should be deeply involved in the discussion that determines the meaning of the experience (Kelly, 1969, 1970). The meaning attributed to the experience by the person actually having the experience, in this case, the student teacher, is given high status. The research project is therefore, rooted in a constructivist theoretical position regarding the professional development of teachers (Erickson, 1987; Shapiro, 1991b, 1996). The principles of Personal Construct theory (Kelly, 1970) are used to explain the ways that student teachers understand changes in their experience, providing a framework for helping student teachers themselves analyze the meaning of changes in thinking about their own growth and development. Personal Construct Theory seeks to understand how individuals make sense of experience. One might consider the experience of student teaching to be like solving a problem, a series of problems, or even several problems at once. Kelly suggests that it is through imposing meaning on experience that we make sense of it and that we accomplish this by straddling the unknown world with what we know. In this research project, the use of students' personal constructs, indicators of their ways of organizing the known world, allowed the involvement of student teachers in systematic dialogue about changes in their thinking which might not otherwise have been noticed.

Narrative Inquiry with Student Teacher, Martha

Martha was selected for the development of a case study of narrative reflection discussions because of she had changed dramatically in both her sense of preparedness and confidence for teaching following the first set of methods course experiences and her first practicum experience and was very interested in participating in discussions about her construct changes. In addition, several of her changes allowed significant similarity or contrast with other students' views to the point that the value of sharing perspectives on several case reports concerning similar issues with students in the class were found to be very useful points of discussion for the entire class.

Martha was a mature student. She came to the teacher preparation program with substantial coursework in Biology, Chemistry and Ecology and some introductory coursework in Physics. She was 32 years old, a mother of two children and with a good deal of work experience prior to entering the teacher preparation program. She described how she selected the field of science education as a career. "Following high school, I had originally wanted to become a veterinarian, but marriage and my family redirected those plans for several years."

Martha had worked in several part-time jobs, the most recent being that of medical secretary prior to entering the joint degree program in education and Biology at the university. She moved with her husband and children from an eastern province three years ago. She had no experience in any type of educational setting. Martha had an image of herself as a teacher:

> "I see myself teaching grade 11 or 12, possibly Biology or Chemistry. I want to get out of the explaining listening rut with kids, laughs, the way university professors of science teach. I want to change the ways that kids learn science by learning to plan interesting labs. I think there should be more interdisciplinary approaches to teaching science. I expect that there will be field trips, I expect that I will be spending lots of late nights marking. I'd like to offer

students extra study sessions outside of class and will probably be involved in extra-curricular activities in the school."

When asked what were the greatest influences on her development as a science teacher Martha commented that most of her science teachers in school and her professors "were mediocre, really. And I can think of one grade 7/8 teacher who was really awful. In a strange way, that motivates me, to want to offer something much better than I experienced. I think that highly motivated students will be the greatest influences on my teaching."

When asked what she considered might be some of the greatest hurdles to overcome in teaching she stated, "I have great family demands outside of class, so it will be important to plan well. But the biggest challenge, I think is that I am a bit shy and, well, my voice is not loud and commanding. I think that I will have to work at establishing authority in the class."

She was asked what her expectations of the Secondary Science Methods class were: "I imagine that we will prepare a lesson plan, will learn about the depth of content that is appropriate to students. I guess that we will do a fair amount of lab work, learn about setting up labs and planning labs. Mostly, we will probably learn how to prepare for lessons."

As students in the class had experienced two years of coursework and some classroom experience prior to the program, they were beginning to reflect on their teacher preparation program. When asked, "If you could plan your own teacher preparation program, what would it look like? ", she responded, "Well, (laughs), there would definitely be much fewer EDPA (Educational Administration) classes. I find them useless. (Pauses). I would have really benefitted from much earlier involvement in the classroom in my program, more practice in speaking and in giving mini-lessons. I think that there should be lots of sharing and discussions about actual lessons, in this case, science. Most of the education courses that we have taken are not helpful. I think that there should be less education courses and more content courses in my field, science. There should also be more practice courses.

The Use of Personal Constructs as Collaborative Tools for Narrative Reflection

Personal constructs are essentially linguistic structures by means of which the individual categorizes experiences. Personal constructs are used to anticipate new situations and guide behavior in a new or unfamiliar realms. In the case of this study, the new realm is learning to take on the role of science teacher. The research involved nine interviewers working with 23 volunteer student teachers prior to, during, and following the first segments of a science methods course and practical teaching experience. The first portion of the methods university-based course took place over 10 weeks in September, October and November, followed by a four week practicum in a school setting in November and December. The second university-based portion of the methods course took place over a seven week period in January and February followed by a practicum experience in a different setting, this time for six weeks. Survey information was collected and interviews were conducted prior to and following the first university based methods course and the initial practical teacher experience. Each novice teacher worked closely with an interviewer. Together they developed sets of personal constructs. Martha's constructs are shown in Table 1.

The procedure used to develop the constructs was the following: In September, prior to experiences in the methods course, each interviewer was given two item lists. These lists are statements about what teachers think about and do and were the starting point for generating personal constructs with the student teachers. The lists were prepared during the summer prior to the methods course through collaboration with three student teachers who were to be in the class and three practicing secondary science teachers. Both groups were asked to provide statements describing what teachers think about and do. Detailed description of the process of generating personal constructs may be found in a number of resources (Fransella and Bannister, 1990; Shapiro, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1996) and will be summarized here. Fifteen constructs were generated for each student teacher. The interviewer presented three items randomly selected from one of the element lists, then asked the student teacher, "How are two of these alike and different from the third?" The statement of likeness became one pole on a construct list. The statement of difference became the opposite pole of the construct. Students rated each element using the same set of 15 constructs generated. They did this twice, once on the first day of the methods course, and again following the first 10 weeks of the methods program and the first practicum experience. With the assistance of the interviewers, individual sets of personal constructs were used with preservice teachers to reflect upon changes in their views about the thoughts and actions of science teachers. Changes in the use of personal constructs during the student teachers' development experience provided a rich focus for discussion about the reasons for changes that occurred during the teacher preparation experience.

The personal constructs were used in the interviews as "tools for sensitive listening" (Mischel, 1964). Their use allowed discussion of specific aspects of change which became apparent to the student as a result of the discussion surrounding the construct changes. Several interviewers commented on the value of the constructs in giving focus and direction to the conversations. The personal constructs showed the student teachers themselves how they had changed in the ways they categorized the activities and events of teaching.

Reflecting on Personal Construct Changes

The substantial amount of data collected have been analyzed in many different ways. An analysis of all 23 student teachers based on significant (more than 3 squares) and complete reversals was compared to the kinds of discussions that occurred when changes were pointed out to students. Reported in Shapiro, 1991, a set of Change Categories were developed to describe the categories of change that can viewed as themes of change in groups over time.

Martha is an individual who made significant changes in her sense of preparedness and sense of confidence as a teacher between the beginning of the first portion of her methods course and practicum experience and its conclusion. Such dramatic positive change is highly desirable from the point of view of teacher educators. Insights from her case report are organized to attempt to show the usefulness of this approach to the study of professional development experiences and to understand significant features in the professional preparation experience that might have helped to bring about such positive change. This has been done using reflection on personal construct changes, and through inquiry into Martha's narrative contributions in conversation with a caring guide who encouraged her to engage in this narrative reflection. Ultimately, such reports may be useful not only for those involved in the development of teacher preparation programs, but have potential use as case report reading for students themselves as they attempt to understand and

articulate their own learning experiences, growth and change. During the course of organizing the report, several changes in students' thinking occurred that might not be considered positive developments, but that give important insights into the kinds of changes that occur in the professional development experiences and that are significant starting points for discussion with students.

Changes associated with the first element raised some very interesting changes for Martha and for several other students and are presented here as examples of the kinds of discussions that have taken place regarding the construct changes and their potential for use in teacher preparation class discussions. Martha's constructs for the element, "Marking Papers," is presented in Table 2. First, it can be seen from an analysis of Martha's constructs that she made a distinction between activities in which teachers are working on their own and those in which they are working with students. She also distinguished between activities and thinking in which she is preparing for teaching as contrasted with activities in which she is actually working with learners. She has made significant shifts in several of her constructs in relation to this element. When asked about the changes noted in construct #3, in which she placed marking student papers at the "Preparation" pole, then made a major move to the Teaching pole, she remarked:

> I didn't realize that I had made such a big change, but it makes sense. I think that a lot of what I considered to be administration kinds of things that I did, that is, that I didn't think of involving the students is not the way I think now. Everything I do is done with them or with them in mind. I had not thought about it that way before I actually got into it, really got the class into my head. I think about them or am influenced by them all the time, it's not like I'm doing stuff in a solitary way, they're always there in my thinking.

A number of students provided similar constructs, but useful and differences occurred as well. In the fall, Karen distinguished activities which she called "Activities which involve real teaching" from those which were "Just administrative details - administratrivia." In September, she placed the item "Marking Papers" close to the construct pole, "Just administrative details - administratrivia." In February she placed the same item in the opposite pole of this construct, "Activities which involve real teaching."

Karen was invited to review the changes in her constructs and to comment on the changes that had occurred. She spoke about how she believed her thinking had been transformed:

> I now see it [marking] as an important way of interacting with students on a daily basis. When I mark a paper, I'm making a comment to students, sometimes, I write one down. It's actually a way of communicating with them. I don't just correct it and give it back to them, I see what they did (laughs). I never thought of it that way when I got papers back myself, though. It's a way of talking to the students.

Following the first practicum, the students reviewed the items using the construct systems which they had generated. In many cases, students made large changes in their ratings, (counted as a shift of 3 or more on a scale of 1-5). As in the example above, there were some cases of complete reversal of the original views. The interview allowed researchers to understand, in student teachers'

own words what changed in their thinking and the multiple sources that contributed to the insights gained.

Although we might be very pleased with the changes in Martha and Karen's thinking about the element, Marking Papers, there are other types of changes that provide insights into what is learned in the process of becoming a teacher that might cause greater concern about the nature of student teacher development. For example, in September, Mick placed the element, "Having students take notes," closest to his construct pole, "Teaching." In February, after his methods courses and first round of student teaching, he made a complete reversal, placing the element closer to the pole, "Maintaining discipline." When asked about the dramatic shift, he commented:

> I've discovered that having students take notes can be a great way to control the class. I use overheads in class as a management technique. Every time I use the overhead, the class is really quiet.

This realization on the part of the student teacher provided a startling insight to about the way that the student was beginning to think about discipline and forms of conveying information to students. Mick's story was developed as a case discussion for a future class, focussing on the teacher's dilemma of providing appropriate techniques to guide the behavior of learners. The discussion raised the importance of encouraging student teachers to build lessons based on features that promote genuine interest in subject matter as an attention-getting strategy rather than using note-taking as a strategy to control the class.

The February interviews also used survey data and information collected in September to give depth to the conversation between the preservice teachers and the interviewers. Prior to their meeting, the interviewers compared the pre and post survey sheets for each individual student, noting changes that occurred in responses to survey questions. In addition, major shifts were noted in the student teachers' ratings of items on the personal construct charts. Both types of data were shared with the student teacher during the interview. The interviews with students were planned to allow informal and spontaneous conversation, but with a focus on the meaning of changes in student thinking.

The conversations were tape recorded to preserve the students' own language. The interviewer combined this data with information about changes that had occurred and showed these changes to the student teacher. The student teacher was invited to talk about whether she or he had, in fact, experienced this change and if so, to identify the possible sources of the change, the kinds of forces at play, or any insights that the student teacher was aware of as possible reasons for the changes which had occurred.

The Value of the Research Approach - Teacher Education

One of the great benefits of the research approach has been the way that it allowed direction of attention and conversations to specific aspects of the experience. When student teachers are asked the question, fresh from practical experience, "What changes occurred for you in the student teaching experience?", students are not always able to comment. This is a difficult question to answer. The student teacher has had so many experiences, yet rarely has an opportunity to effectively reflect on significant changes in thinking. What kind of growth was made in the learning experience?

Reference to information gathered before the student teaching program and reviews of personal construct changes with the project interviewers allowed students the opportunity to discover through reference to their own personal idea changes, how their thinking had moved in specific ways might not otherwise have been apparent to either the interviewer or the student.

The personal constructs served as a means of analyzing and reflecting on the new realities which were coming into existence for students. New images of teaching and learning emerged as students discussed both the shifts in their constructs and changes and understandings reflected in the survey data. In another analysis of the data collected, the types of changes occurring within the larger group were organized as Themes of Change (Shapiro, 1991a). As noted in the change themes (Shapiro, 1991a), new language structures emerged as students noted that some prior constructions no longer held, that new distinctions were now being made and that new ways of constructing experience were coming into existence.

Use of the 'Change Themes' in the study of student teachers has shown potential for helping to bridge the need to survive the practicum while effectively reflecting on one's development as an educator. The Themes can be shared with student teachers to show the changes which typically occur in the development of an understanding of science teaching. This would allow students to grasp what might be expected in the student teaching experience and would encourage the sharing of experiences in large and small group situations. A focus on the emergence of new images and terminology for describing the teaching experience will help students to use new language to articulate and clarify their own current viewpoints.

Research in the Study of Professional Preparation in Clincal Nursing Education

A surprising dearth of published scholarly works addressing clinical teaching in nursing education exists (Lindeman, 1989; Shoffner, Davis, & Bowen, 1994; Tanner, 1994; VanArsdale, 1995; Wood, 1991). "In the last decade, fewer than 10% of the articles published in the *Journal of Nursing Education* have explicitly focused on clinical teaching" (Tanner, 1994, p.387).

Previously, studies of clinical teaching done in nursing education have been descriptive, generally surveying students and faculty for their opinion of characteristics of effective teachers. Using a quantitative approach, Morgan and Knox (1987), Nehring (1990) and Sieh and Bell (1994) measured effective instructor characteristics using the Nursing Clinical Teacher Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI). In these studies, students and faculty perceptions differed markedly. The only general similarity was that both students and teachers perceived that being a good role model was the highest rated characteristic for 'best' teachers and the lowest rated characteristic for 'worst' teachers.

Similarly, Brown (1981) and Bergman and Gaitskill (1990) used the Clinical Teacher Characteristics Instrument (CTCI) to measure student and faculty perceptions of effective teacher characteristics. Again, and despite being a decade apart, student and faculty responses to this instrument differed. In 1990, faculty ranked relationships with students as more important than did the faculty of a decade earlier, yet in both studies, students were more concerned with communication-related attributes than were faculty.

Additional tools directed to identifying teaching actions have also been developed recently. For example, Theis (1988) developed a structured scaled free response instrument to identify the types and frequency of unethical teaching behaviors that nursing students encounter and the degree

to which students find these behaviors problematic. Further, Morgan and Warbinek's (1994) work shadowing 12 clinical instructors resulted in the production of the Observations of Nursing Teachers in Clinical Settings (ONTICS) instrument to measure desirable and undesirable clinical teaching behaviors. Catalano (1994) created the Status and Promotion of Professional Nursing Practice Questionnaire (SPPNPQ) to determine the extent of instructors' use of empowering activities. Another questionnaire, devised by Clifford (1992), gathers base line data to explore teachers' views about their role.

An overall trend to study clinical teaching exclusively from the instructors' perspective also persists in current qualitative as well as quantitative nursing education research. Crotty (1993) and Owen (1993) both interviewed instructors to explore the nature of the clinical teaching role. Crotty (1993) in her Delphi study of 201 nurse educators from 25 colleges in the United Kingdom found that limited ongoing professional development was offered to nurse educators. Owen (1993) in her action research on a British psychiatric unit found that teachers had difficulty maintaining the research, teaching, and change catalyst demands of their role. Commenting on the multidimensional role expected of Canadian nurse educators, Myrick (1991) indicated that expectations within the role include demands that the nurse educator teach in the classroom, instruct, and facilitate in the clinical setting, publish on a prolific basis, research clinical and academic matters, participate in and chair numerous committees, act as student advisor, and demonstrate active involvement in the community-at-large, as well as possessing the ability to be on the leading edge of nursing knowledge.

Thus, while a paucity of published research addressing clinical teaching in general exists, specific contributions have been initiated, but from the perspective of instructor knowledge more than student knowledge. Shapiro's (1991a, 1991b) approach using personal constructs as tools for narrative inquiry provided a framework to listen credulously and to include the voices of student nurses themselves in the scholarly dialogue surrounding their learning.

Narrative Reflection with Student Nurse, Mary

Mary was chosen for the development of a case study of narrative reflections discussions, because, like Martha, she changed dramatically throughout her practicum. Mary brought a stronger than average knowledge of the field of psychology to her clinical experience in a provincial mental institution site. Shapiro's (1991a, 1991b) approach employing narrative inquiry and reflection on construct changes was particularly effective in helping this student to articulate her own personal growth and development. Additionally, Mary's repertory grid, included as Table 3 provides a visual illustration of how her thinking completely reversed in relation to four of the ten nursing activities studied.

The case report which follows is framed from data collected during four collaborative in depth interviews with Mary during her six week clinical practicum in psychiatric mental health nursing. In the first interview, at the beginning of the course, Mary began constructing her repertory grid through a process of triadic elicitation. Six personal constructs were elicited from ten elements or everyday psychiatric nursing activities. The ten elements, included as Table 4, are representative of the area of psychiatric nursing and span a range of tasks which most student nurses expect to both observe staff nurses completing and to engage in themselves. To develop bi-polar constructs, Mary randomly selected three elements and answered the question: "Which two do you think are the same and different from the third?" On the left side of her grid, she used her own words to describe what

was the same about two of the elements and entered her phrases as an emergent pole. On the corresponding right side she noted what was different about the third element and entered her comments as an implicit pole. Once six descriptive words or phrases were personally constructed on opposite sides of the grid, each element from the list of nurses' activities was rated 1 2 3 4 5.

The second interview with Mary was unstructured and took place mid-way through the course on her assigned unit at a provincial mental institution. This interview provided an open opportunity to discuss what the clinical experience was like for Mary and how things were going for her. The third interview took place once Mary completed her rotation. This interview was audio-taped and transcribed. Mary answered a questionnaire developed by psychiatric nurse-educator Eris Perese (1996) and completed the repertory grid she had initiated at the beginning of the course. Once again, she rated the list of elements or nurses' activities as 1 2 3 4 5. Looking at her before and after course grids and the words she originally chose to describe her thinking, Mary discussed and reflected upon the changes which had occurred. Notes from the mid-term interview with Mary, transcriptions of her audio-taped post-course interview, comparisons of her before and after repertory grid and her questionnaire responses were subjected to Vee Heuristic diagraming, concept mapping and collaborative case study reporting.

A fourth interview occurred once drafts of the case report was complete, and Mary confirmed that the following report authentically narrates her reflections of the personal construct changes which occurred for her as a result of her psychiatric mental health nursing clinical rotation.

Mary's Case Report

Mary is an adult student who completed a Bachelor of Arts degree before enrolling in the Faculty of Nursing. Mary majored in psychology and one of her reasons for choosing nursing was that a "career counselor told me about psychiatric nursing, and I thought it might fit with my degree."

Mary was the only participant in the present study who expressed an interest in the field of psychiatric mental health nursing before completing the practicum. She was also the only participant who chose to attend the Alberta Hospital Ponoka site for her clinical experience. The Alberta hospital Ponoka is a provincial mental institution about a three-hour drive from Calgary. Throughout the six-week clinical placement, the students and their clinical instructor drove out individually to the facility on Thursday mornings. They met as a group for a pre-conference, joined the unit staff for a two-to-ten shift that evening and then spent the night in a two-room staff "house" located on the hospital grounds. On Friday mornings the students and their instructor were part of the day shift from seven-to-three, attended a post conference and then went their separate ways to drive home Friday evening. Canadian winter driving conditions were often unpredictable and Mary's clinical instructor frequently arranged a "cavalcade of cars" and ensured that "someone had a cell phone when we were on the highway." The students who chose this placement were a self selected group, many of whom "knew each other before the experience." One of the students in Mary's group commented that: "We wanted the best experience and we knew this was it." Mary earned a clinical grade of A in her practicum and shortly after the course began, her clinical instructor noticed that she was a "strong student." Mary is single and her family live out of province. She boards in Calgary and works twenty to forty hours a week as a waitress.

At the end of the course, Mary continued to be interested in the field of psychiatric mental health nursing, but "probably not as a hospital staff nurse". She left the experience with "more

questions" about the area and wondered what working in "forensic psychiatry or with teenagers in schools" might be like. The clinical placement was her "favorite so far" and she described it as "excellent — interesting and stimulating." However, Mary's clinical experience failed to provide her with adequate opportunities to reflect upon her own process of constructing knowledge. Mary demonstrated the required competencies for her nursing course and she readily adapted to the unique milieu of a provincial mental institution. And yet, beyond the required and expected competencies, Mary's repertory grid suggested that she also clearly demonstrated dramatic changes in her own personal growth and professional development as a result of the rotation. Even with the intense 24-hour exposure to instructors and peers, with the exception of the present project, these profound personal changes were essentially unacknowledged within the framework of the course. Shapiro's (1991a, 1991b) technique with personal construct theory and rep grids provided a useful approach to reflect upon and acknowledge those important changes during discussions with Mary.

When Mary first arrived on her assigned unit, she felt "insecure" in the stark "bare" environment. Handed a set of keys, she was immediately drawn into the institutional protocol of unlocking and "securing" the heavy hospital doors. She felt welcome and included by the hospital staff group and sensed that a spirit of community existed between staff and patients. On acute psychiatric wards in urban general hospitals, professional staffs are often indistinguishable from their patients. In this provincial institution setting however, several of the patients wore hospital pyjamas and robes and many wore slippers rather than street shoes. Staff members all wore large badges with their name and affiliation and all staffs were required to carry keys. Mary was struck by the "silence" of the facility and as she looked at the patients, she thought: "I see the people here as sick, I feel bad and I want to help."

The day I joined Mary on her clinical unit mid-way through the course, she shared how her own learning was progressing generally. In particular she commented on two issues she was in the process of working through. The first issue centered on establishing therapeutic boundaries. The second issue involved distinguishing activities specific to nursing from activities implemented by other professional groups. Looking at the first issue, Mary questioned how she could establish therapeutic boundaries with an "infatuated" female patient "who likes me and follows me around." Mary wondered how to "cope with the frustration and burnout" when a patient "can be admitted 35 times." Another patient told Mary that "I'm not getting the help I need here." Mary found herself feeling "upset, exhausted, funny, and disjointed" when she left the clinical laboratory.

As Mary reflected on the second issue of separating nursing activities from those of other professional staff groups, she looked at the activities she saw nurses engaging in. She observed: "They're always busy, but I'm not sure what they're doing." Mary noticed that psychiatric mental health nurses "spend a lot of time advocating for patients when they're on the phone with physicians." She saw nurses "locking, unlocking and checking the doors a lot." Mary admired one nurse who "had the patients all making chili in the kitchen"one evening. Similarly, she appreciated how another nurse "sat and looked at pictures" with a patient. Piecing together the unique nature of mental health nursing, Mary did not have a clear picture of what the role of the psychiatric nurse entailed.

> I wonder what the nursing role really is. We're not trained in some things. The social workers deal with child abuse, the occupational therapists arrange outings like bowling or swimming. I think it would be nice if nurses were more involved.

During this mid term interview, Mary also mentioned that she was enjoying her experience and "learning a lot." She did not observe any "cruelty" or "nurses talking down to patients here." She felt that she had "help" with strategies to establish the necessary boundaries in her relationships with patients. She also felt that she was developing a deeper understanding of what a therapeutic milieu "is like." Joining staff and patients on outings away from the institution, Mary enjoyed the milieu she felt with the staff-patient group: "Going into town for bowling was fun. On the bus ride we had the music turned up loud and we were all singing together."

Mary's repertory grid reflected the most dramatic changes in thinking of all of the six study participants. Through the process of constructing and rating the grid before and after the clinical placement, I learned of Mary's background in the field of psychology, her belief that "behavior can be modified," her pre-session interest in psychiatric nursing, how she developed her ability to set boundaries, what it was like for her to drive the six hours each week to attend the clinical site and how the experience left her physically and mentally exhausted. On her grid, Mary categorized the ten nursing activities studied as "creating compliance or not creating compliance," "one to one communication or indirect communication," "communicating or physical," "professional or personal," "assessment or evaluation," "social or therapeutic."

Mary constructed her grid thoughtfully and took care with the words she chose. At one point during the post course interview, as Mary rated the nursing activities as either "assessment" or "evaluation," she commented: "I'm having problems with this construct." At the beginning of the course, she found the everyday mainstream nursing terms of assessment and evaluation adequate to classify the psychiatric nursing activities. But, after her clinical experience, the "concrete" terms did not seem comprehensive or "abstract enough." In response to the more in depth view of the distinct and separate nature of psychiatric nursing she gained through her practicum, Mary's ways of categorizing nursing activities seemed to loosen and become more open.

The narrative approach to grid changes revealed that, for Mary, a complete reversal in thinking occurred for four out of the ten activities studied. In all four instances, at the end of the course, Mary rated the psychiatric nurses' activities on the opposite end of the five point scales.

The first set of construct changes that were reversed was based on the element "Administering a PRN medication to an agitated patient." Originally, Mary categorized this nursing task as "assessment," but after the course she saw it as "evaluation." She explained her reasoning: "When you give the medication you've already made the assessment. You've evaluated the behavior and made the decision to give the medication." One of Mary's fellow students described a situation where staff members role modeled a team approach to subduing an agitated patient with a PRN medication. The student equated the nursing actions to "cardiac arrest code procedures" and described the observation as "exciting."

The second element in which Mary's constructs were reversed was pointing out discrepancies in a patient's verbal and non verbal behavior. At the beginning of the course Mary felt this was "evaluation," but rated it as "assessment" at the end of the course. "Now I think that if you're

pointing out discrepancies, you're not really evaluating the person, you're pointing out discrepancies to see how the patient is going to react. That's all part of assessment."

The third grid reversal occurred in reference to the element, "Denying a noncompliant anorexia nervosa patient's request to spend time together." While Mary did not have an opportunity to work with a patient diagnosed with anorexia nervosa, she did find herself in the position of having to "say no" to non compliant patients. At the beginning of the course she saw this as "indirect communication . . . because indirectly you're trying to modify (patients') behavior." At the end of the course she commented: "Now I see it more as telling them straight off that we can't spend time together and that's it." Mary agreed that she had developed a more confident capacity to project a firm approach and to set limits as a result of her clinical experience.

Mary viewed the fourth and final element, "Accompanying a patient on an off unit smoking break", completely differently in two of her personal constructs by the end of the course. She looked beyond just the action of "smoking." She construed the element under study as any off-unit patient excursion or game. She initially viewed these activities as simply "personal," but later rated them five increments over beside "professional." Similarly, at the beginning of the course, she viewed joining patients in activities as "social" but at the end of the course, viewed the task as "therapeutic." Mary clarified what she meant by joining patients in activities as "professional not personal" and "therapeutic not social."

> Before I had the experience on the unit, and even from other students, I heard that all you do is color and play cards and that it's boring. I didn't find it boring at all — I found it exhausting. That was a big change for me.
>
> Outside the hospital, things like smoking, drinking coffee or going on outings like bowling seem like personal or social activities because you're not evaluating someone's behavior. In this setting, anything you do with patients — you're assessing them. You're assessing social skills like task mastery, concentration, ability to deal with things like winning/losing . . . You're at work, nothing you do should be personal or social, it should all be professional or therapeutic.

Thus, as the above examples illustrate, narrative reflection using the repertory grid approach was an effective method for inviting Mary to reflect upon her personal learning and the changes in her thinking which had occurred during her clinical experience. After the course was over, I asked Mary what stood out for her. She replied:

> Just how exhausted I could be after playing cards or going for walks. You're always thinking. You're always trying to assess (patients) and you're using so much of your mind. It's draining! That stood out for me. I had a patient cry with me and I was just shaking. I have never experienced anything like that before, except with my friends, but never in a therapeutic way. I was shaking, I didn't know what to do. I talked her through it and I felt fine until after and then I felt like crying because it really affected me. Some days I'd go home and feel really depressed and kind of disjointed almost, not all together.

The course curriculum provided Mary and her fellow students with an opportunity to share their feelings by designating group post conferences. However, in Mary's view:

> Working two-to-ten, up the next day at five-thirty in the morning, work until three and then the drive home — it just didn't lend itself to rest time much. By the time post conference rolled around, we were all pretty tired. Then, it's over and you're alone again.

Non-evaluative opportunities to discuss and reflect upon the nature of the personal knowledge which was constructed during the practicum was missing for this student. Through her experience of sharing overnight accommodation with fellow students and her clinical instructor, Mary found she valued informal debriefing discussions:

> I know nursing used to be like this. You'd be in a residence of nurses and personally I know for all my rotations that would really help me because when I talk about nursing, that's when I learn the most. I'm not around nurses a lot because of my job and where I live. It was great to be totally focused in that environment. I thought that environment was excellent.

Reintroducing opportunities for students to stay in historic nurses' residences may no longer be feasible in clinical nursing curriculums. However, Shapiro's (1991a, 1991b) educational adaptation of repertory grid techniques offers a promising new approach which does create an opportunity for student nurses to discuss and reflect upon the nature of personally meaningful knowledge which they constructed during the course.

The Value of the Research for Clinical Nursing Education

In the competency-based world of clinical nursing education, opportunities for nursing students to articulate personal meaning are conspicuous by their absence. Hospital accreditation boards and professional nursing associations impose rigorous standards of practice on Registered Nurses. Patient safety, the credibility of professional nursing, the employability of graduates and the economics of nursing instructor time all impact the process of learning in today's health care settings. For Mary, the narrative reflection approach to considering construct changes provided an opportunity to extend the process of learning and socialization into the profession of nursing beyond simply demonstrating required competencies. Through narrative reflection on her construct changes, Mary's personal learning was articulated and celebrated. As well as offering a research methodology, Shapiro's (1991a, 1991b) adaptation of repertory grid techniques provides an educational tool. Inviting students to use their own words rather than instructional language dominated by health care terminology opens deeper conversational possibilities among student nurses, their clinical instructors and their professional role models.

For student nurses, the opportunity to share their own views about their clinical experience is an important aspect of closure. Meeting individuals whose struggle with mental illness has led to a hospital admission is an intense and, as Mary articulated, "exhausting" experience for learners.

Student nurses deserve the opportunity to discuss the impact which their course has had on them and how they have reacted and changed in response to that impact.

For instructors, eliciting students' personal constructs, constructing repertory grids and then reflecting upon the changes which occur can reveal some of the previous knowledge, experience and beliefs which individual students bring to their clinical practicums. The content of the repertory grid itself is a striking visual illustration of personal learning. The process of constructing and reflecting upon the personal constructs indicates whether the words and phrases students used at the beginning of the course continue to be adequate, or whether students have incorporated new language and methods of self-expression. The process also clarifies individual goals which students set for themselves, and how students seek out resources to progress with their own goals. For example, Mary viewed discussions with her peers a a helpful learning resource. And yet, limited opportunities for her to do so existed within the design of her course. Further, the process of suspending an agenda of instruction in order to listen credulously to students' constructions of their experiences equip clinical instructors with a technique to role-model the skill of listening actively and empathically.

For practicing nurses, students' perceptions of nursing activities mirror how those activities can be perceived by individuals outside the occupational group. In addition to encouraging conversations where students seek explanations from Registered Nurses, narrative reflections on students' personal constructs should stimulate questions among professional nurses. Mary's difficulty distinguishing the role of the nurse from roles other professional groups assume raises broader questions such as how members of the public might perceive what nurses do.

Bringing the Voices of Students to the Teaching/Learning Multi-logue

As Bell and Gilbert (1996) note, "managing the feelings associated with the change process and viewing the change as a challenge rather than as a problem" are necessary conditions if students are to be able to put new ideas into action in the classroom (p. 114). If students are to make changes in their thinking, they must be offered opportunities to consider, articulate and deal with the experiences they are having in the classroom. The change process is enhanced when students realize that other students and practicing professionals experience the same kinds of thoughts and feelings. As Bell and Gilbert note further, the change process requires "taking calculated risks, planning and knowing what else to do, having courage, confidence, control of the pace of change and ownership." (p. 119) Not only does this require personal change, but social and political conditions that allow such change. The same is true for all students in professional development programs.

If we are to address the dilemmas of students, we must allow **them** to describe to us what it is that they consider to be a dilemma, then assist in providing the opportunities to develop the resources to deal with those dilemmas and other aspects of uncertainty for students. The use of personal constructs in the study facilitated understanding of what constitutes knowledge of one's profession and what students consider to be dilemmas at the beginning of the professional development experience. They were then able to talk about what had changed for them, became a new insight or surprised them. Focussing on these changes helps us to understand how students use what they know -- how they interpret the experiences we offer them to straddle the unknown worlds of teaching and nursing with their current language and image resources.

Personal Change Through Narrative Opportunities During the Professional Preparation Experience

Much has been written about the ways that individuals might more effectively develop and change through the ongoing narrative activity of telling one's story (Bruner, 1990; Clandinin & Connolly, 1991; Connolly & Clandinin, 1986; Dixon, 1987; Fisher, 1985; Howard, 1991; Kerby, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1991; Tappan & Brown 1989). It is the telling and retelling of the stories of one's life experience that provides continuity and coherence to one's life, but is also a vital means of reauthoring one's story and changing one's self. As Casey (1995) notes, "the new narrative research has radically changed educational inquiry" (p. 239). It is the sense of human agency that is the significant contribution of the new narrative research (p. 214).

The primary argument of this paper is that the professional development program should not only incorporate student voice but it, itself should be an occasion to articulate and value changes in one's own development and socialization into professional life. It should provide opportunities for students to speak their stories of change to allow them to take up their own discourses and reveal the worldviews, images, language and personal meanings that help to understand what it means to think and act as a professional. In the two studies presented here, the engagement of students with interviewers, in addition to using the materials collected in the initial discussions, surveys, the elicitation of personal constructs, and the documentation of changes in the constructs, have all contributed to helping the students build narratives of their experience. As research it provides important insight into the ways that student views and beliefs change and are transformed during participation in coursework and professional practica. It emphasizes the importance of making professional preparation programs not just a place where discussion of change take place, but that **this discussion can be the primary focus and vehicle** that provides the occasion for the professional students to articulate and value changes in their own development.

Vital in the organization of this vehicle is the collaborative role of a caring guide or facilitator, in the case of this research, the research interviewer, to assist the student to articulate these changes. There are many ways that such an approach using narrative reflection might be facilitated in professional preparation programs. In practice, there are many participants in the professional education programs who typically undertake the role of assisting the student in articulation of changes in one's conceptions: the course instructor, the student teacher's or nurse's cooperating professional in the practical experience, or the university representative advising the student. Similar roles are played by colleagues in clinical nursing education. There are, at present, significant problems to be overcome in facilitating this kind of discussion and emphasis upon the student's growth. An approach which strives to make students more aware of changes in their growth also asks that facilitators contribute their own stories of development and change to the discussion, sharing their own histories of growth and change in thinking about what it means to teach or to be a psychiatric nurse. As Darling-Hammond notes (1994), "Research on the experiences of beginning teachers confirms that the likelihood of long-term success for many is impaired by the absence of expert guidance, support, and opportunities to reflect on their efforts" (p. 7). The same is true in research on many other professional development programs. Initial socialization and learning experiences for professionals have far-reaching effects, for they influence the attitudes and competencies a professional develops and maintains over a career, as well as the all important decision about whether to continue with that career.

A reality of many professional programs is the fact that students are usually members of a fairly large class. The initial socialization experience is a very personal and individual experience, often facilitated with difficulty for students in large group situations. Individual work with students is often limited by workload demands on advisors and supervisors. The studies described here provided opportunities for closer observation and interaction with students than is usually experienced, and participants in both experiences commented on how meaningful they found this opportunity to disuss their experiences. Professionals in the field would benefit from guidance in helping students clarify and articulate changes that occur during these first professional development experiences. The data collection approach used in this study allowed students to articulate and affirm changes and transformations in their growth which they might not have been able to otherwise recognize. The research collaborators were able to help students create their own personal meanings for experiences as they reflected upon them together. The personal constructs generated by the students served as powerful categorizations of experience and permitted students to see and talk about changes that might have been overlooked.

Reflection on the initiation into the new reality of oneself as professional requires revision and change in a student's viewpoint. A new view of the learning child or a novel approach to a laboratory experience is far more likely to be entertained when students see the benefit of making the change in viewpoint for themselves. As Maxine Greene (1973) has written, this perspective is ultimately at the heart of change: "No matter what degree of objectivity is attained, no matter how universally accepted are the rules, the final decision is up to the individual" (p. 253).

This research into the professional development of students in two professions is based upon a related assumption about personal and social change, that our interpretations of the environment are subject to revision and replacement. Preservice professionals are more likely to accept new viewpoints if they can become aware of the personally meaningful implications of new ways of thinking. The main point of the argument presented here is that this change process should be not an outcome of, but the central activity of the professional preparation program. As this is accomplished, professional educators, student teachers, and student nurses become aware of the personal-social construction of what it means to be a member of one's profession and that it is sometimes a profound and at other times, a very subtle process of growth and change. Having an opportunity to identify and discuss changes in their own thinking and development and closely observing their own and others' changes in ideas about what it means to teach or to nurse can provide very powerful insights into both self as a professional and into the culture of one's profession. In this way, novice professionals become students of their own growth and development.

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Table 1. MARTHA'S CONSTRUCTS

1.	Exploration	1.	Approaches to clarify an idea
2.	Housekeeping duties	2.	Developing and changing attitudes
3.	Preparation	3.	Teaching
4.	Communicating and sharing	4.	Administrative work
5.	Passive on students' part	5.	Student and teacher interacting
6.	Preparation	6.	Doing something with students
7.	Things you do	7.	Involves and attitude
8.	Characteristics of a good teacher	8.	Actively doing with students
9.	Housekeeping duties	9.	Teaching
10.	Day-to-day duties	10.	To clarify something
11.	Solitary things	11.	Being involved with a student
12.	Teacher planning and preparation	12.	Evaluation
13.	Lesson preparation	13.	Counselling
14.	Cooperation	14.	Not cooperating
15.	Concerned with where student is	15.	Not caring about the student

Table 2. MARTHA'S REPERTORY GRID CHART: EXAMPLE CONSTRUCTS AND RATINGS BASED ON ELEMENT #1 - PRE- AND POST- RESPONSES

Element 1. Marking student papers.

	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Exploration		E		B		1. Approaches to clarify and idea
2. Housekeeping duties	**B**			**E**		**2. Developing and changing attitudes**
3. Preparation	**B**				**E**	**3. Teaching**
4. Communicating and sharing		**E**			**B**	**4. Administrative work**
5. Passive on student's part	**B**			**E**		**5. Student and teacher interacting**
6. Preparation	**B**			**E**		**6. Doing something with students**
7. Things you do	**B**			**E**		**7. Involves an attitude**
8. Passive on student's part	B		E			8. Student and teacher interacting
9. Housekeeping duties	**B**			**E**		**9. Teaching**
10. Respecting students			N			10. Policing students
11. Solitary things (teacher)	**B**			**E**		**11. Involved with students**
12. Teacher planning and preparation			N			12. Evaluation
13. Lesson preparation	B		E			13. Counselling
14. Cooperation			N			14. Non cooperation
15. Concerned with where a student is	N					15. Not caring about the student

B = Placement at beginning of course
E = Placement at the end of 10 weeks of initial coursework, 4 weeks of practicum, then 7 another weeks of coursework
N = No change
Constructs in **Bold**: **Complete reversal** or substantial movement (3 columns) in ratings

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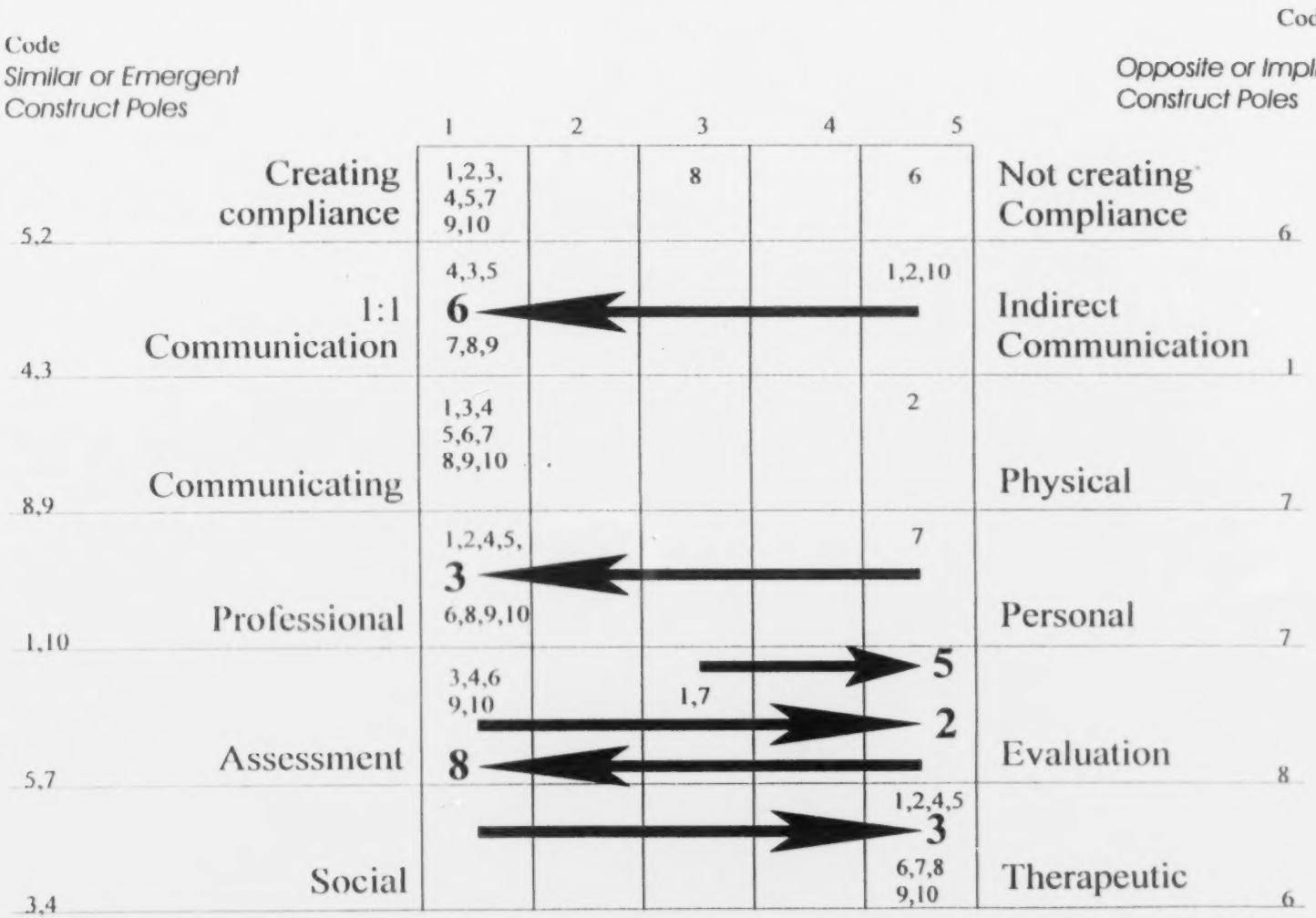
TABLE 3. MARY'S REPERTORY GRID



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